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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 12 June 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the address given on 8 June 1995 by His Excellency the President of Kazakstan, N. A. Nazarbaev, to the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as an official document of the General Assembly under item 70 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Akmaral Kh. ARYSTANBEKOVA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Kazakstan
to the United Nations

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Annex

Address given on 8 June 1995 by the President of Kazakstan to the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva

I extend my warmest greetings to the participants at this session of the Conference on Disarmament.

It seems to me highly symbolic that the admission of the Republic of Kazakstan as an observer to the Conference on Disarmament should coincide with the destruction of the last nuclear explosive device at the former Semipalatinsk test site in Kazakstan.

However, I do not want to confine my speech to a simple enumeration of the steps taken by Kazakstan in the sphere of disarmament. These steps have been highly praised by the major world Powers and by international organizations, and they are well known to all participants at this session. Because Kazakstan has taken these steps, the security of its territorial integrity has been guaranteed by the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, China and France.

The theme of my speech is quite different, namely, "New challenges and a new vision of disarmament processes and global security".

Put another way, what stage of the process of world disarmament and global security have we reached today, in the mid-1990s, and what new challenges will require a response from us by the end of the century?

It seems perfectly clear that the purpose of disarmament lies outside the disarmament process itself. This is obvious. It is a sorry gardener who busies himself with flowers alone. Unless he keeps an eye on the heavens, storms and tempests will catch him unawares.

In exactly the same way, our criteria for judging the effectiveness of the disarmament process are introduced by society and the public at large from the realms of creativity and development which exist independently of the actual process.

The success of the disarmament process is not only measurable in terms of the percentage of warheads, delivery vehicles, tanks and guns that are scrapped; it can also be gauged by the increased availability of benefits for ordinary people.

Genuine security does not mean cutting back on weapons, it means an increased birth rate since mothers no longer fear for their children's future in giving birth to them.

Most important of all, the success of the disarmament process is linked to and determined by the effectiveness of existing international security systems.

Seven years ago, at the third special session on disarmament held in July 1988, it was noted that disarmament is not the sole responsibility of a handful of powerful States but a joint undertaking of all States.

I should like to develop this idea in a broader context: building an effective global system of international security is a joint undertaking of all States, and disarmament is one of the goals of this "universal joint undertaking".

If we look at the disarmament process in this light, we can see that a number of very serious problems are currently brewing.

Problem number 1 - How effective are the existing systems of international security and disarmament processes?

If we judge the quality of international security by such objective indicators of the disruption of civilian life as the number of refugees, we see that the number of refugees world wide has increased hundreds of times over during the last decade.

Whereas in 1983 there were just nine countries where the total number of refugees exceeded 50,000 inhabitants, 10 years later this category included 31 countries and millions of people had become refugees. As we can see, the number of such countries more than tripled in the space of a single decade.

Thus, in assessing the effectiveness of disarmament processes and international security, we should have the courage to acknowledge that the potential for conflict in the world has increased significantly in recent decades.

It is now becoming obvious that this potential is not limited to the traditional indicators of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, the reduction of which has for the last quarter of a century been at the centre of the debate.

It is equally clear that existing international security systems cannot really be deemed effective if they are unable to halt an increase in tension.

Disarmament processes and the establishment of international security systems were by and large successful in the 40 years following the end of the Second World War.

However, since the mid-1980s we have witnessed a sea change in the global situation. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the disbanding of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and other trends were never envisaged when the existing international security systems were established.

Today, it is becoming increasingly clear that existing international security systems and the disarmament processes which they embrace need to be reinterpreted and fundamentally reworked.

The increasingly explosive situation in the Balkans provides ample confirmation of this fact. This hotbed of conflict is continuing to flare up despite all the efforts of international security structures.

It has been some time since what was once a local conflict developed, before our very eyes, into a regional one. And there are fears that the conflict could soon assume continental proportions.

It seems clear that conflicts of this sort should be extinguished at the earliest possible stage, while they are still being fought out at the regional level. Effective regional security systems are needed to achieve this.

Such an approach would significantly reduce the likelihood of regional conflicts taking on a continental or global dimension, as we are currently observing in the former Yugoslavia.

This implies that a new vision of international security systems and disarmament processes is required in order to meet the familiar challenges of the 1980s and 1990s.

Problem number 2 - What will be the direction of change in the potential for world conflict by the end of this century?

We can answer this question by recognizing that regional, continental and global international security systems and the disarmament processes they embrace basically stem from the economic and strategic interests of the countries and groups of States which comprise them.

History shows us that international security systems are always based on a perception of the common interests of the participating countries; these interests are primarily economic, but they may also be geoeconomic, geofinancial and geostrategic.

Consequently, the direction of change in the potential for world conflict by the end of the century will largely be determined by global geoeconomic trends in the late 1990s.

Over the past decade, it has become clear that global geoeconomic trends include the formation of three major new world economic centres - in North America, Western Europe and South-East Asia. It seems likely that the coming century will also witness the "awakening" of the African continent.

The main features of these three centres of world influence will probably become clearer sometime around the end of this century and the beginning of the next.

Obviously, this search for a new balance of world economic forces will undoubtedly lead to a search for a new world strategic balance, including a balance in the sphere of security systems and the ongoing processes of armament and disarmament which such systems embrace.

If these trends accelerate, there is every reason to suppose that the potential for world conflict will also increase by the end of the century and thus present us with new challenges.

It follows that the "universal joint undertaking" to build international security systems and to disarm should compel us to join forces now with a view to formulating a new vision of the new challenges arising at the end of the 1990s.

Problem number 3 - The involvement of third world players in disarmament talks

It is widely acknowledged that, thus far, the most important disarmament talks have been conducted between the major Powers of East and West without the involvement of representatives of the third world.

How productive will this approach be at the end of the 1990s?

I shall dwell on security problems in Europe and Asia, since these are the ones which most directly affect my country, the Republic of Kazakstan.

It is perfectly clear to us in Kazakstan, situated as we are at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, that the West is building new international security systems based on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the resources and structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Meanwhile, to the east and south-east, the Asian countries members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) will probably look for ways to cooperate politically and militarily within their own structures.

It is immediately obvious that a solid vertical bloc of Eurasian countries stretching from Russia in the north to India in the south (including the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan) currently do not belong in either the Western or the Eastern camp.

I would call this solid geopolitical belt of countries, located along a meridian in the centre of Eurasia, the "belt of uncertainty" or the "wait-and see-belt".

Despite the internal differences among the countries located in this "belt of uncertainty", they form a fairly integrated bloc in terms of their potential to influence not just the balance of power in Asia or Eurasia but even the geopolitical balance of the entire world.

Security problems in Europe and particularly in Asia, and any issues involving cooperation between the world economic centres of Western Europe and South-East Asia, will depend to a considerable extent on how the countries of this geopolitical "belt of uncertainty" define their position and direction.

The largest and most powerful of these countries is definitely Russia. The stability of Eurasia and the changes that take place there will to a great extent be determined by the choices that Russia makes.

All in all, Russia is faced with three choices. The first is to ally itself with Western European structures, but these structures do not want to admit Russia. The second is to draw closer to East Asian structures, but here the same problem arises. The third option is to weld all the countries of the "belt of uncertainty" into a single group founded on the principle of equality, thereby establishing a third security system on the Eurasian continent.

The remaining Asian countries of the "belt of uncertainty" have just two options - either to look eastward, or to build their own third security system and tackle disarmament issues inside this bloc.

Yet another new aspect of the problem of transforming the security and disarmament systems in Eurasia, which had not been apparent earlier, emerged after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

Today, most of the new independent States of the former socialist camp are thinking primarily about setting up their own national security structures.

I would call this new factor "new autonomous security". It cannot but be accompanied by an arms increase in these countries. It is completely natural to seek to rely first of all on oneself and one's armed forces and then subsequently on some sort of security system and participation in the disarmament process.

It should also be kept in mind that the disarmament process may be used by certain countries as a means of modernizing their weapons.

This "new autonomous security" situation requires a completely different framework for building an international security system.

Under these circumstances, such systems cannot be built from the top down. In all likelihood, it will be more acceptable in this case to build gradually one's own armed forces and then a regional security system, and only afterwards to participate in existing continental and global international security systems and the corresponding disarmament processes.

Therefore, the new geopolitical situation has also resulted in a new role for the developing countries (or the third-world countries) in the processes of disarmament and the building of international security systems.

The time factor alone requires that the United Nations and other world disarmament and international security structures should strongly emphasize patronage and the establishment first of all of effective regional security systems. Then, on that basis, existing continental structures for international security must be transformed or new ones created.

An analysis of the security problems on the Eurasian continent indicates that the third-world or developing countries must be involved on an equal footing in all disarmament negotiation processes.

This will make it possible to eliminate the inherent tendency of the great Powers to needlessly ideologize disarmament processes. It may also give rise to a new vision of the new challenges to international security and disarmament systems.

On the basis of its own vision of the three international security and disarmament problems pointed out above, my country, the Republic of Kazakstan, has been resolutely and actively participating in all processes aimed at setting up security and disarmament systems at all levels of international cooperation in Eurasia.

First, this relates to our policy of combining the efforts of three Central Asian States - Kazakstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan - in maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia.

Second, it involves Kazakstan's active policy of integration into the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the field of international security and disarmament.

Third, this is reflected in Kazakstan's initiatives aimed at the convening of a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia. It involves the long-term work of setting up modern security and cooperation structures, on the basis of which it will be possible in time to begin negotiations on disarmament on the Asian continent.

Fourth, it relates to Kazakstan's participation in the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Partnership for Peace programme, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START-I), as well as the Disarmament Commission.

The Republic of Kazakstan, in all its practical foreign-policy steps relating to international security and disarmament questions, acts on the basis of the two principles of the new vision referred to above.

First - "proceeding from an understanding of the new geoeconomic trends to a search for new approaches to disarmament by improving existing international security systems and establishing new ones".

Second - "proceeding from the building of regional disarmament systems to the search for effective ways to enhance global security systems by improving and transforming continental security systems".

I believe that this approach to developing a new vision of international security and disarmament will enable us to find appropriate responses to the new challenges arising at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the next century.

Unless these general questions are resolved, we shall always come up against obstacles, unexpected developments and unsolvable problems in dealing with particular practical disarmament issues.

I believe that the Conference on Disarmament will be unable to avoid dealing with these questions, which are raised by life itself, and in time will find the appropriate responses.

I should like in particular to stress that the practical steps taken by the Republic of Kazakstan in the field of international security and disarmament are designed first of all to ensure the unconditional and complete implementation of all international treaties and agreements in that area which we have signed and to which we are a party.

Our deeds speak for us.

Almost five years ago, we were the first of the CIS countries to remove all tactical nuclear weapons from our territory.

Kazakstan was the first of the countries that are parties to the Lisbon Protocol to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State and we closed the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

The removal of more than 1,200 intercontinental ballistic-missile nuclear warheads from the territory of the Republic of Kazakstan was completed in April of this year. The last nuclear warhead stored underground at the Semipalatinsk test site was destroyed on 30 May.

Now, the territory of Kazakstan is completely free of nuclear weapons.

It is precisely these practical steps by my country and our firm commitment to all international agreements concluded that allow us to raise the question of how and on what basis the search for new approaches to international security and disarmament issues can be carried out.

It is precisely on the basis of our firm position that I can ask myself and you the questions that were heard earlier.

I clearly see that the task of solving these three problems may, to some extent, be beyond the competence of the participants at the current session and the Conference on Disarmament as a whole.

It is precisely this clear realization which allows me to address you directly since I am sure that real success in the disarmament process first of all depends on personal efforts, a wealth of experience and the talents of all persons present in this hall, of all the, figuratively speaking, "tireless workers of the world's joint enterprise for disarmament and security".

I also clearly see that raising these three problems to a certain extent may transcend traditional notions about the contemporary disarmament processes.

But I explained that the purpose of my statement to you was precisely to expand our vision of disarmament problems for meeting the new challenges and to proceed beyond the traditional conceptual framework of disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is facing new challenges arising from the new situation resulting from the profound world-wide changes of the 1980s and the 1990s.

We must find a new vision of international security and disarmament problems in order to have the means to deal with these new challenges and in order to identify them correctly.

Under these new conditions, therefore, disarmament amounts to arming oneself with a new vision of the new challenges. And I believe that we shall find an appropriate response.

We welcome the re-establishment, within the framework of the Conference, of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban and note with satisfaction the start of multilateral negotiations in this area.

Kazakstan has three modern seismic stations capable of recording underground phenomena at a distance of thousands of kilometres. We are offering to link these stations to a global monitoring network, which can become an effective verification instrument.

We appeal to the nuclear Powers to extend the moratorium on nuclear tests until the signing of the corresponding treaty and call upon those who are continuing to conduct tests to join in the moratorium.